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1977
REPORT ON VOLUNTARISM
IN
THE STATE OF MONTANA

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PREPARED BY:

Ed Smith, Research Specialist
Volunteer Bureau, Human Resources Division
Department of Community Affairs

Nancy Raue, Chief
Volunteer Bureau

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The Volunteer Bureau of the Human Resources Division/Department of Community Affairs serves as an advocate for voluntarism in Montana. In November of 1977, the Bureau inventoried some of Montana's voluntary resources trying to examine the impact that voluntarism had on services in the State.

Questionnaires were sent to 1,430 organizations and agencies who the Bureau thought would use volunteers or might anticipate a need for them in the near future.

Survey results are as follows:

-1,430 questionnaires distributed;

-47 questionnaires returned because the organizations no longer existed;

-338 questionnaires returned from organizations -- 37 of these could not be considered applicable because the agency did not do voluntary kinds of work -- 65 of the questionnaires returned did not have information on them that was computable. The remaining 236 questionnaires were usable. From these, the Bureau calculated that in 1977 alone, over 42,205 Montanan's volunteered in one capacity or another. This amounted to over 3,183,400 hours of service with a cost benefit of $9,442,397. These figures are rough estimates and are based upon data collected from the survey which covered only a small percentage of voluntary activities in Montana, but that are impressive and gratifying.

As an agency that fosters voluntarism, we have arrived at some conclusions that we feel must be addressed if voluntarism is to meet its full potential.

1. Attitudes towards voluntarism have to change. Voluntarism cannot be viewed as a stop-gap measure to combat needs of people that are not financially attainable by government. It must be woven into the basic fibers of both public

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and private programs. Recognition from civic, business and governmental leaders (and not just lip service) has to take place along with a firm commitment to establish volunteer programs at all levels of government and industry.

2. Employees at all levels should be involved in the planning process. If volunteer programs are to be designed within work situations, they must be well planned and specifically accepted by all employees regardless of job type. Volunteer administrators need not only involve the agency boss in the planning process, but also every employee within the agency. This will create a climate of understanding which, in turn, will make for a successful and effective program. It involves all employees in training, placement and critique of the volunteer program and a stake in its success or failure.

3. In the past, the main thrust of voluntarism has been directed toward the area of social justice, and although this area is deserving of support, other opportunities have to exist for people to volunteer in and to generate broad public support which is a key to a successful program.

4. Volunteer programs, if they are to reach full growth, can no longer remain fragmented and disorganized. Programs must be based and planned upon sound management structures with strong emphasis on leadership potential, while at the same time guarding against setting up paper monuments, mini-bureaucracies and making a concentrated effort to protect the spontaneity of voluntarism.

5. Volunteer groups also have to learn to cooperate with one another and share information willingly and openly -- thus, ending turf guarding, which is so prevalent in the movement today. This is one of the main obstacles to an overall, effective program.

6. Labor must be educated to recognize that voluntarism is neither a threat nor an obstacle to their well being, but a full partner whose aim is one of service expansion.

7. Legislation, both at the state and federal level, must be introduced to insure that the concept of voluntarism is recognized and to remove restrictive language from the statutes that prevents government from using volunteers. This legislation should include provisions for workman's compensation insurance, thus making the volunteer a first class citizen.

In concluding, the Bureau found a strong dichotomy between people's desire for more services, but less bureaucracy. We feel that government has a responsibility to use the talents and skills of her citizens to their fullest potential, but at the present time public attitudes and laws serve as barriers to this possibility. Government should be enhancing the opportunity for voluntarism. The resource is lying idle. It is time that government, the business community and ordinary citizens, together, step forward and use it.